



BOLIVARIAN THREAT NETWORK

February 2021

The following is a summary of open-source media reporting on the Bolivarian Threat Network's activities in Latin America and the Caribbean in February 2021. This is not a complete list of media reports on the Bolivarian Threat Network's activities in Latin America but are some of the most relevant articles and reports selected by SFS researchers and fellows. The monitor does source a limited amount of media reports from state-owned or -controlled media outlets, which are carefully selected and solely intended to report on news that is not reported on by other media and is relevant for understanding VRIC influence in the region. This report is produced as part of our VRIC Monitor published monthly by the Center for a Secure Free Society (SFS), a non-profit, national security think tank based in Washington D.C.



- Colombia President Ivan Duque announced the creation of a new elite commando unit to fight Marxist rebels and drug-traffickers that seek refuge in neighboring Venezuela. Duque told Radio Nacional the country would launch the Specialist Commando against Drug-trafficking and Transnational Threats on February 26 and be "fully operational" in May. - [France 24 on 08-FEB](#)
- The Chavista National Assembly anticipated that it will seek to prosecute interim president Juan Guaidó. "In the next few hours we will issue a" preliminary "report to the plenary of the National Assembly that determines that former deputy Juan Guaidó is involved in the commission of alleged punishable acts that commit him to civil, administrative, political and criminal responsibility," he told the press José Brito,

president of a commission that, he says, investigates legislative directives under opposition control (2016-2021). - [Infobae on 05-FEB](#)

- Venezuela has sentenced two managers of state oil company Petroleos de Venezuela to five years in prison on charges of divulging confidential information, chief prosecutor Tarek Saab wrote on Twitter. Authorities had arrested Aryenis Torrealba and Alfredo Chirinos, from PDVSA's supply and trading department, in February 2020 on allegations that they had leaked information to the U.S. government, which in 2019 sanctioned PDVSA as part of Washington's push to oust President Nicolas Maduro. - [Reuters on 05-FEB](#)
- The Chavista regime is looking for investors from Russia, China, Iran and Turkey, from corrupt Venezuelan plugged mafias and organized crime to survive. - [ABC International on 01-FEB \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- SEMANA reveals the encrypted files of alias Uriel, the powerful ELN commander recently killed. He intended to attack Uribe's children, his tentacles reached more than nine countries, and his messages show the financing of campaigns, the planning of kidnappings in Argentina and the recruitment of foreign university students. - [La Semana on 30-JAN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The United Nations will send an expert to analyze the impact on human rights of the sanctions unilaterally imposed on Venezuela, the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) announced. The special rapporteur on unilateral coercive measures and human rights, Alena Douhan, Belarusian, will travel to the Latin American country from February 1 to 12, OHCHR said in a statement. - [Infobae on 29-JAN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- A longstanding, high-stakes border dispute between Guyana and Venezuela has gotten even testier, with the United States and the Organization of American States stepping into the fray. OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro is condemning what he calls the illegal detention of two Guyanese-registered fishing vessels and their crew by "the Venezuelan dictatorship" in Guyana's exclusive economic zone. - [Miami Herald on 28-JAN](#)
- Venezuela's Juan Guaido is a "privileged interlocutor" but no longer considered interim president, European Union states said in a statement, sticking by their decision to downgrade his status. The EU's 27 states had said on Jan. 6 they could no longer legally recognize Guaido as after he lost his position as head of parliament following legislative elections in Venezuela in December, despite the EU not recognizing that vote. - [Voice of America on 25-JAN](#)
- The European Union called for broad political talks in Venezuela to set up new elections, and warned that it stands ready to slap sanctions on more senior Venezuelan officials in the country if they undermine democracy or take part in human rights violations. - [Washington Post on 25-JAN](#)

- The Court of the Maduro regime promised to "judge and sanction" the deputies of the National Assembly chaired by Juan Guaidó. Maikel Moreno has attended, together with the socialist dictator, the opening ceremony of the judicial activities of the year 2021 and has supported the work that the Attorney General's Office, also under the control of the tyrant, and is carrying out against the legitimate deputies of the National Assembly. - [Infobae on 23-JAN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Swiss prosecutors have identified bank accounts containing some 9 billion francs (\$10.1 billion) that may have come from embezzled public funds in Venezuela, newspaper Le Matin Dimanche reported. Since opening investigations in late 2019, public prosecutors in Zurich have become aware of funds held by people close to the Venezuelan government in hundreds of accounts at around 30 banks, according to the report. - [Bloomberg on 17-JAN](#)
- Colombian police are investigating whether a shipment of guns and magazines originating from the United States that was seized by authorities late on January 16th was destined for Venezuela, a person familiar with the matter said. - [Reuters on 17-JAN](#)
- Guyana has deployed more army troops along its disputed border with Venezuela amid a flare-up in tensions. Nicolas Maduro vowed to "reconquer" the resource-rich Essequibo province where ExxonMobil is developing a giant offshore oil field. The Essequibo covers the western two-thirds of Guyana. The enhanced Guyanese deployment follows a government agreement with the US to improve its military capacity, as the two countries' coast guards conducted joint exercises. - [Argus Media on 15-JAN](#)

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- Senator Cecilia Requena of the Comunidad Ciudadana (CC) party in Bolivia reported that the cost of building the nuclear center in the city of El Alto increased by \$62 million without an explanation by the government. - [Notibol on 14-FEB \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The governments of Bolivia and Cuba decided to resume bilateral economic, trade and political activity, including an analysis for the revival of exports between the two countries, the Bolivian Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade and Integration, Benjamin Blanco reported. - [Urgente on 13-FEB \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Evo Morales admitted having lied about his travels to Cuba. The former Bolivian president confessed that he visited the island after leaving the government to secretly meet with Chavist and Castrist leaders, rather than health problems. - [Infobae on 13-FEB \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The Bolivian Legislative Assembly, controlled by former President Evo Morales' party, approved an amnesty and pardon "for political persecution" for more than 1,000 supporters of the former governor. - [Los Angeles Times on 12-FEB \(content in Spanish\)](#)

- U.S. attorney Thomas Becker reported that victims of the massacres recorded in 2019 in Bolivia are evaluating international scenarios for prosecuting former Government Minister Arturo Murillo and Defense Minister Fernando López. - [Eju TV on 11-FEB \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The Biden administration turned down a meeting request with El Salvador's president on an unannounced trip to Washington, as criticism of the Central American leader mounts among Democrats, three people with knowledge of the decision said. The trip by Nayib Bukele, which has not been previously reported, came after a senior White House official warned in an interview with a Salvadoran news outlet highly critical of Bukele that the Biden administration expected to have "differences" with him. - [ABC News on 09-FEB](#)
- President Alberto Fernández will travel to Mexico to visit counterpart Andrés Manuel López Obrador this month. The trip, officially to mark the 200th anniversary of Mexico's independence, will take place February 24th, Fernández's press office said in an emailed statement. The invitation from Mexico's president was extended "in attention to the strong ties of collaboration and friendship between both countries, and by virtue of the common historical aspects in our nations' fight for independence" from Spain, the statement said. - [Buenos Aires Times on 09-FEB](#)
- Left-wing indigenous leader Yaku Pérez denounced a fraud attempt to remove him from the presidential race in Ecuador, as he fights a tough battle with right-wing former banker Guillermo Lasso for second place on the ballot. Andrés Arauz, appears as the winner of the first round on Sunday with 32.14% of the votes, according to the National Electoral Council (CNE). - [Infobae on 08-FEB \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The United States is deeply concerned about the escalating crackdown by the Government of President Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua. The regime's actions under the so-called "Foreign Agents Law" forced the closure last week of two bastions of free expression: the Nicaragua chapter of PEN International and the Violeta Barrios de Chamorro Foundation. Ortega is driving Nicaragua toward dictatorship. - [U.S. Department of State on 08-FEB](#)
- The Russian Chargé d'Affaires in Bolivia, Iakov Fedorov, confirmed that official letters were sent to the government of Jeanine Áñez asking for payment for the operating expenses of the Ilyushin bomber aircraft, which in 2019 helped to put the fires in the Chiquitanía. - [Correo del Sur on 06-FEB \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- President Biden is ending agreements signed by the Trump administration that allowed the government to send some people seeking asylum in the U.S. to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, the State Department said. One agreement, signed with Guatemala in 2019, allowed the U.S. to send asylum seekers from El Salvador and Honduras who crossed the U.S. southern border to Guatemala, where they were told to ask for humanitarian protection instead. Similar agreements, signed the same year with El Salvador and Honduras, were never implemented. - [Wall Street Journal on 06-FEB](#)

- The Government of Bolivian President Luis Arce decided to reinstate the visa requirement for US and Israeli citizens that was suspended during the temporary administration of former President Jeanine Áñez. A decree approved by Arce and his cabinet of ministers resolved to annul another one issued by Áñez in December 2019 that had transferred to the United States and Israel to the list of countries whose citizens do not require a visa to enter Bolivian territory. - [EFE on 02-FEB \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- State media reports Argentina's Foreign Minister Felipe Sola noted that the solution for Venezuela belongs to the Venezuelans, while participating in the meeting of foreign ministers of the International Contact Group (ICG). During the meeting, Sola called for working on humanitarian access and the possibility of using blocked funds to pay the Covax (Global Access Fund for Vaccines against Covid-19) so that this nation can have access to the drug. - [Prensa Latina on 02-FEB](#)
- Killing the children of Álvaro Uribe, kidnapping in Argentina and infiltrating protests in Chile are just some of the plans revealed in the captured ELN commander “Uriel’s” files seized by Colombian intelligence. - [Infobae on 30-JAN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Former presidential candidate Marco Enríquez-Ominami summoned presidents Alberto Fernández (Argentina) and Luis Arce (Bolivia) to lead the fifth meeting of the Puebla Group, an international group of progressive leaders. The meeting, on Friday, January 29th, had the participation of 11 former presidents, including Ernesto Samper (Colombia); Rafael Correa (Ecuador); Dilma Rousseff (Brazil); Leonel Fernández (Dominican Republic); Fernando Lugo (Paraguay); José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (Spain) and Lula da Silva (Brazil). - [CNN Chile on 28-JAN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Thousands of migrants from Central America are on their way to the United States, and a migrant activist group representing the caravan is calling for the Biden administration to honor its "commitment." As many as 8,000 migrants from Honduras have entered Guatemala, Guatemala's immigration authority informed Reuters on January 16th. - [Reuters on 16-JAN](#)
- Guatemalan authorities said they already had detained hundreds of Honduran migrants from the caravan. - [The Blaze on 16-JAN](#)
- President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said that evidence the U.S. government handed over to Mexico against its former defense minister has “no value,” widening a rift on law enforcement policy between the two nations. - [Bloomberg on 15-JAN](#)

ALEX SAAB CASE

- The case of Alex Saab, the appointed figurehead of Nicolás Maduro, went again before the plenary session of the West African Court (Cedeao). His defense insists that the Barranquillero, a record of the Venezuelan regime, is a diplomat with immunity. But the response from Cape Verde was overwhelming. Henrique Borges, his representative, alleged that Cape Verde does not recognize the authority of the Cedeao Tribunal to

decide this case, since it has not signed the Additional Protocols of the tribunal. - [El Tiempo on 05-FEB \(content in Spanish\)](#)

- Miami Press Agency reports that on Sunday, February 1st, a group of Venezuelan citizens gathered in large numbers on the streets to protest for the unlawful detention of Ambassador and Special Envoy Alex Saab in the Republic of Cape Verde. - [PR Newswire on 03-FEB](#)
- A Colombian businessman was carrying a letter from Maduro accrediting him to Iran's supreme leader when he was arrested on a U.S. warrant last year, according to a new court filing in a politically charged corruption case ratcheting up tensions with the South American nation. Attorneys for Alex Saab made the filing in Miami federal court Thursday just hours after prosecutors in the African nation of Cape Verde said they granted the 49-year-old Colombian house arrest as he fights extradition to the U.S. to face money laundering charges. - [Associated Press on 22-JAN](#)